

**ABSTRACT**

A mechanism is provided to a user which allows “ubiquitous” searching – searching of possibly heterogeneous search repositories. In one embodiment, this search mechanism is provided by means of a search framework underlying a web-based user interface. When a search request is made, the underlying search framework detects the search request and its associated parameters, associates the search request with the required search provider or providers while still exposing (through the search context) the full search functionality for all search providers currently configured with the search framework, dispatches the search requests, and handles the return of search results in a unified format. The search providers follow the search framework’s interfaces through which the search framework can detect the search method offered by the search provider, and results format and option information.